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AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN PASS TO AMEMBASSY GRENADA
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PASS TO AMCONSUL QUEBEC
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PASS TO AMCONSUL RECIFE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2030/01/18

TAGS: PREL VE

SUBJECT: TFHA01 Chavez: "U.S. is taking advantage of the earthquake to occupy Haiti"

CLASSIFIED BY: Robin D. Meyer, Political Counselor, DOS, POL; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶11. (C) Summary: On January 17, President Chavez accused the United States of "taking advantage of the aftermath of the earthquake to occupy Haiti," saying "they are armed as if they were going to war." He called on the U.S. to send more doctors and rescue workers instead of soldiers. Chavez' statements are similar to those made by Nicaraguan President Ortega on January 15 and Bolivian Vice President Garcia Linera on January 18 and suggest a coordinated message by ALBA allies. The government-controlled press has carried this criticism. Separately, a website operated by the Venezuelan Ministry of Communication and Information covered a report linking U.S. military activity to the earthquake in Haiti. End Summary.

ALBA Members Accuse the U.S. of Using the Earthquake to Occupy Haiti

¶12. (C) President Chavez denounced the positioning of U.S. military forces in Haiti during his Sunday Alo Presidente talk show on January 17, saying "why are you sending 3000 soldiers armed as if they were going to war?" Chavez continued by saying that it looked like the United States was militarily occupying Haiti, and said, "Obama, send what is necessary - doctors and rescue workers - instead of sending soldiers." Nicaraguan President Ortega and Bolivian Vice President Garcia Linera made similar accusations on January 15 and 18, respectively, indicating at least a shared vision, and likely a coordinated message, from these ALBA members.

Government Media Reiterates the Accusation

¶13. (SBU) Government media reported prominently on President Chavez' statement. It also covered the criticism of U.S. intentions by Hector Navarro, the ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) spokesperson and Minister of Education. In a PSUV press conference on January 18, Navarro accused the U.S. of taking advantage of the tragedy in Haiti to militarily occupy the country. Apporea.org, a pro-government website, ran a story claiming that the United States had sent "spy planes (drones)" from Afghanistan

to Haiti.

¶4. (U) There has been extensive coverage of Venezuela's contributions to the relief effort and the official media carry messages indicating where donations of food and supplies can be made for the earthquake victims. Venezuelan media in general has widely covered the events in Haiti, including stories of looting and the need to improve security.

Venezuelan Government Website Says U.S. Military Activity Caused the Earthquake in Haiti

¶5. (U) The Ministry of Communication and Information Vive website reported that the Russian Northern Fleet had determined that the earthquake in Haiti was a "clear result" of a U.S. Marine test of one of its "earthquake weapons." In an article dated January 18, the website said the United States knew that the test could cause an earthquake in Haiti, and had pre-positioned SouthCom General P.K. Keen in order to provide help should it become necessary. The report said this test was part of an ongoing project to use earthquakes to overthrow the government of Iran. To date, this accusation has not been reported in the local press.

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